

Midterm consequences on health of the earthquake of 6 April 2009 in L'Aquila (Italy), assessed by the behavioural risk factor surveillance system PASSI

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One year after the earthquake in L'Aquila, all Abruzzo Local Health Units (LHU) with the University of L'Aquila, the Italian institute for health and the support of the Ministry of health, carried out a survey on midterm consequences of the earthquake on health. The analysis, based on the behavioural risk factors surveillance system PASSI (in place since 2007), was aimed at assessing the prevalence of symptoms of depression and anxiety in adults, at monitoring health related behaviour and the prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) with the objective to establish a knowledge base for better informed public health decisions.

From June to October 2010, 958 people living in earthquake area were interviewed by phone (response rate 95%), using the properly modified PASSI questionnaire.

92% of interviewees were in the area of earthquake at time of the event; 5% were injured; 10% knew an injured person, 40% knew a person killed by the earthquake among their relatives or friends, 35% had to leave their home due to severe damage, 45% reported serious economic losses and 15% lost their job. 22% were displaced in a temporary public accommodation.

4% met the definition of PTSD and 16% of depression, higher for women and 50-69 aged years old.

In order to assess changes in depression and health related behaviour associated with the earthquake these results will be compared with PASSI 2007-8 pre-earthquake data from L'Aquila LHU.

The study provides an estimate of non-traumatic consequences of the earthquake, otherwise neglected but financially covered by the National Health Service, and is a useful tool for public health needs assessment and planning in case of a disaster.